

# **Steven Lopez, MPP, MPH**

**2010 HSHPS/US-Mexico Border Health Fellowship Program, Harlingen/Laredo, Texas**

Former 2009-2011 Hispanic-Serving Health Professions Schools (HSHPS) trainee Steven Lopez is a prime example of the positive influence HSHPS training programs have on both the student and Hispanic community.

Through participating in the HSHPS/U.S. Mexico Border Environmental Health Fellowship, Steven became involved in the establishment of a city-wide, multi-collaborative initiative in Laredo, Texas called Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL), which is developing into a non-profit to ensure sustainability.

The goal of the HSHPS/U.S. Mexico Border Environmental Health program is to train graduate level health profession students to identify and address the health challenges of the Hispanic communities along the Texas-Mexico border, specifically in either Harlingen or Laredo, Texas. The trainee participates in workshops about obesity, tuberculosis, diabetes, and zoonotic diseases. In addition, trainees have the opportunity to visit clinics, health departments and hospitals on both sides of the border, and spend time with families in colonias (rural neighborhoods).

HEAL was launched with HSHPS member institution, the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, in conjunction with the Regional Campus in Laredo, the South Texas Environmental Education and Research Program (STEER), and the Dietetics and Nutrition Program. The State of Texas, and more specifically the border region which includes Laredo, is approximately 95 percent Hispanic and facing some of the worst health outcomes in the nation.

According to the Director of the Laredo Health Department, 78.2 percent of the male population and 72.2 percent of the female population are overweight or obese. Furthermore, 1 out of every 4 children is overweight and there is a disproportionate rate of Diabetes Mellitus (DM) among youth. The HEAL Laredo Initiative aims to educate the citizens of Laredo about healthy eating practices, organize opportunities that promote healthy behaviors, and establish policy and environmental measures that will have life-changing effects on the community.

Steven Lopez received a Joint Master of Public Policy and Public Health from the University of California, Berkeley (2008) and a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies from Stanford University (2002). In the future, Steven would like to combine his interests in research and public policy to serve in a role where he can impact chronic disease prevention efforts on both a domestic and global scale. He is also considering pursuing a doctorate degree in public health.